



**Testimony of Krista L. Heybruck
Director of Research, Community Renewal Team
Human Services Committee, February 5, 2015**

**H.B. 5823 – AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A STATE-WIDE COORDINATED
TWO- GENERATIONAL MODEL**

Thank you Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Human Services Committee for reading and considering the following testimony supporting the pilot of two-generation model programs.

Since the agency's inception in 1963, the Community Renewal Team (CRT) has designed and implemented quality programming using the two-generation approach to move low-income families out of poverty. While the popularity of a two-generation approach has ebbed and flowed among the law makers and program developers since the beginning of the War on Poverty, community action agencies, like CRT, have continued to refine and utilize the two-generation strategy with program participants. Most recently, CRT has re-designed its case management approach to better track and measure the impact of services on the entire family.

Case management is the backbone of CRT's many programs, and provides an excellent framework in which a two-generation program can be successful. Over the past four years, CRT has developed and implemented a new case management service model: Steps to Success (STS). Through STS, CRT has strengthened its "any door" to all services philosophy so that at every entry point into a CRT program, case management is available and standardized. At every entryway, the Case Manager does an all-encompassing intake form that facilitates collaboration with the program participant and his/her family to determine additional services that would be useful for developing self-reliance. Two programs intentionally designed using a two-generation strategy are CRT's Early Care and Education program and Generations, a community of 24 townhouses specifically designed for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. If a family comes to CRT through an Early Childhood and Education program or through Generations, they are able to access housing support, behavioral health, financial literacy, nutrition assistance and many other services through a single intake.

According to ASCEND, an Aspen Institute initiative, "social capital, economic well-being, postsecondary and employment pathways, early childhood education, health and well-being, and economic assets are the core components that create an intergenerational cycle of opportunities" (October, 2014). STS is an intensive, holistic and strength-based case management model for families and individuals. It identifies client strengths and builds on community-based relationships to reinforce and support positive changes that will have a long-term impact on these families' lives.

During a participant's initial visit, s/he will have an interview with a case manager using the Self-Sufficiency Outcome Scale Matrix (OSM). This tool uses simple questions to identify existing customer assets and possible barriers to self-reliance in 17 dimensions – 14 family ones (income, employment, job retention, training, education, housing, health insurance, transportation, child care, household budgeting, subsistence, behavioral health, and community involvement) and 3 child/youth dimensions



(school, child behavior and juvenile justice). The OSM establishes a baseline for each family in each of these areas and is re-administered quarterly. Scoring is based on a continuum from in-crisis to thriving (with vulnerable, stable, and safe sandwiched between the two end points. Questions on a computer screen lead the case manager through the family's intake process.

After all information is entered, this powerful system tabulates the results and creates a very readable "score sheet" that is shared with the customer. This sheet has "dimension" on one side (e.g., school, budgeting, employment, etc.) and score (in-crisis to thriving) across the page, complete with little flags that also give a visual representation of a client's most immediate needs. For example, "in crisis" is a red flag, stable green, etc. This simple summation is very useful for helping family members and case managers to develop short and long-term goals and strategies to realize them. Updates to the matrix are printed out as well and the family and case manager will rapidly see where progress in the different areas has or has not been made. These goals become part of each family's Individual Service Plan. This plan is a road map of sequential services, timelines and benchmarks that may be used to progress toward independence.

All CRT Case Managers learn that the assessments are completed *with* the families not for them. The family's voice is essential in establishing and taking the steps that will allow them to progress in their goals. The questions are straightforward and nonjudgmental, culturally and religiously sensitive, and focus on present needs, rather than dwelling on any past failures. *CRT's family approach is based on a philosophy that the pull of the future can be stronger than the push of the past.* The work done through this process gives families the tools to advocate for themselves during and after the period with which they work at CRT.

To date CRT's STS model been very successful. Thousands of at-risk, low-income children and families have tremendously benefited from CRT's two-generation programming and are now better able to meet their needs. Through STS, we can show that from June 3, 2013 through May 31, 2014, over 12,500 new interventions occurred, 2,308 new referrals were made, and 1,953 referrals were completed. In addition to the educational domains typically served through a Head Start program, adult families also received assistance through other internal CRT programs or via external referrals. Examples include parents or guardians: obtaining employment; obtaining permanent housing; improving budgeting skills; enrolling in vocational or educational classes; and attending fatherhood programs (for noncustodial fathers). *This translates into one-half of families enrolled in CRT's Early Childhood programs (most of whom were Head Start families) progressed towards self-sufficiency.*

We hope that you will take CRT's experience and success into consideration when developing the parameters and implementation strategies for the two-generation pilot programs. Please do not hesitate contact us if you have any additional questions, or if the CRT staff can be of assistance in advancing the two-generation approach throughout Connecticut.

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